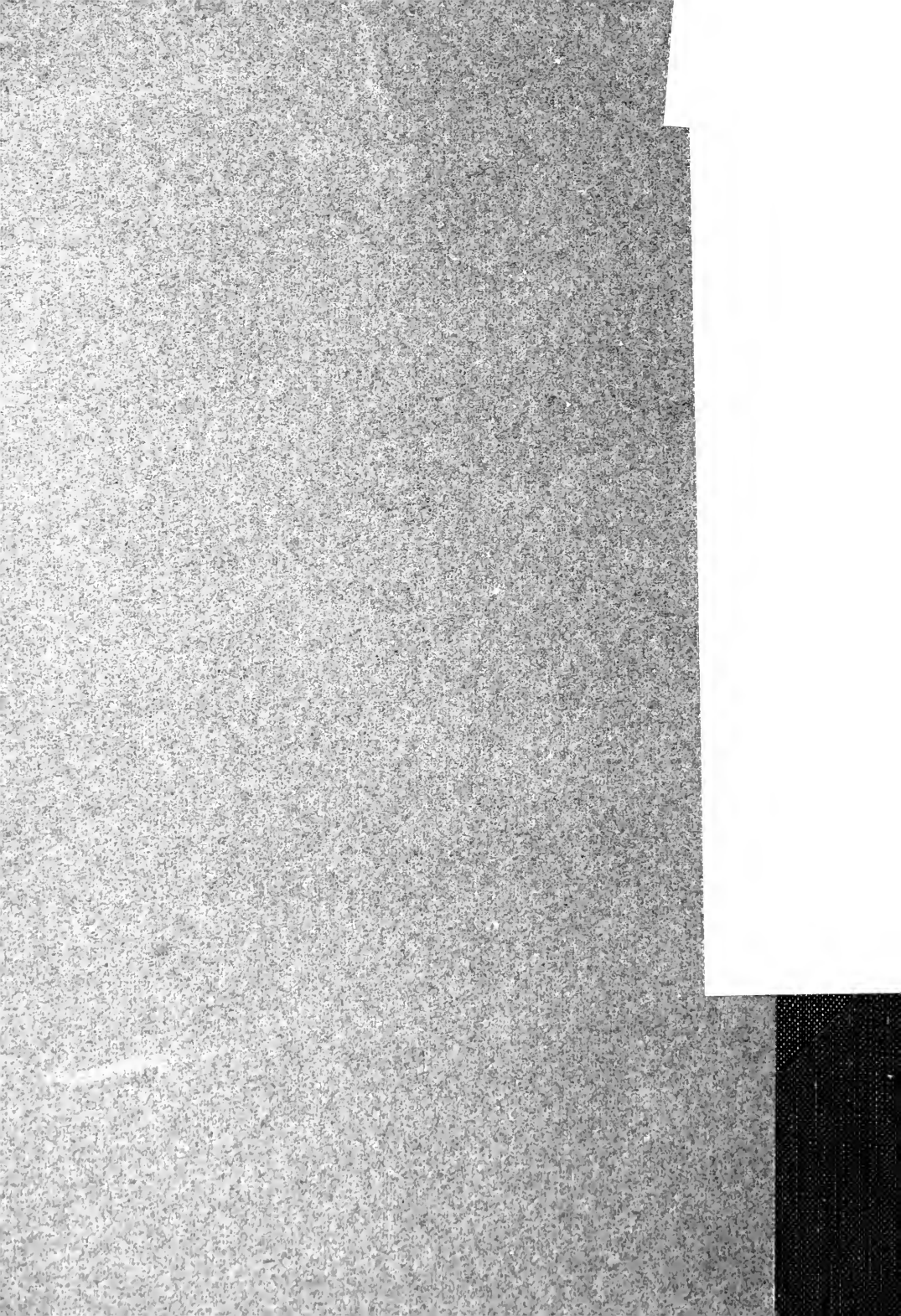


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THE
Views and Meditations
OF
JOHN BROWN.

BY
EDWARD W. WILLIAMS,

AUTHOR OF
AMERICUS MOOR;

OR,
Life Among the American Freedmen.

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Views and Meditations
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JOHN BROWN.

I deem it unnecessary here to give an account of the life of John Brown. The world knows of his birth, early training, his occupation and the great events in which he took part. But of his ideas, there seems to be considerable differences of opinion; not, indeed, as to their purpose, but their sanity and practicability. After carefully studying his character as found in various records, I have imagined that the thoughts and feelings expressed in these verses were the views and meditations that engaged his life. I have, therefore, represented him on the four great occasions of his career. First, as leader of the Anti-Slavery men in their fight with the Pro-Slavery men in Kansas; secondly, when after the Kansas struggles he met his men in Iowa, and there determined to attack Harpers Ferry; thirdly, the night of the attack, and fourthly, before he goes to the gallows. As this is a work solely of the imagination, I here quote, for the attention of those who may criticise me, the words of Lord Macaulay when he was about to put forth a work of a similar nature: "The judgment passed both by the learned and by the unlearned on a work of the imagination will always depend much more on the general character and spirit of such a work than on minute details."

EDWARD W. WILLIAMS,

July 11th.

Washington, D. C.

In Kansas Just Before the First Struggle.

1. Freedom, freedom, has been my song
And shall be till I die,
Or till from every Negro's tongue,
I hear it echo by.
2. Increase my faith, strengthen my heart,
Almighty God my King,
That I may ever do my part,
May work as well as sing.
3. The groans of thy black children
Forever reach my ears,
By my soul I am bidden
To shoulder up their cares.
4. This course, my duty, I'll pursue
Although I feel alone,
And fail or die my deed through you
Will move some others on.
5. Not for the riches of the soil
My brothers do we come,
We come to never let them spoil,
With slavery as its home.
6. The fertile earth, the pasturage
Invite the toiling livers,
But never the horde of bondage
With masters, hounds and drivers.
7. From tyrants its for you and me
These treasures here to save,
That labor true may harvest free
What nature freely gave.
8. Sons of my love, my own heart blood
Around me make your stand,
Hear now and heed my honest word,
And mark my rising hand.
9. Here remember all my teachings
My olden views and promise,
They are the things, the very things,
I came to put in service.
10. Sons, brothers, all, here is the spot
To conquer or to fall,
'Tis justice cause what e'er the lot,
So move at duty's call.

11. If you have love for humankind
For mercy, justice, right,
For God's poor ones stay not behind,
But move in haste and might.
12. See yonder hostile masses
Standing in battle array,
They came to plant in Kansas,
The seed of Southern slavery.
13. With bayonets, guns and kettledrum
That fill our ears and sight,
Ah! let us strike for freedom
While they for slavery fight.
14. They are fighting for a wicked cause
Of sin and shame and lust,
But we are for the moral laws
And in our God we trust.
15. Kansas alone fills not their view
They seek the Western main,
And may succeed if they subdue
Us on this very plan.
16. Then right here now in Kansas
With these obedient hands,
We should drive away the curse
Of all the Southern lands.
17. From early youth till even now
My soul detested war,
For love and peace I make a vow
To all whom e'er I saw.
18. To shed the blood of mortal man
Of any race or clime,
To desolate a lovely land
Must be a moral crime.
19. But when through evil, luck or might
Men go to conquer men,
The true and good possess the right
The wronged ones to defend.
20. Then whate'er system, men or law
Seeks mankind to enslave,
The true and good should open war
For human rights to save.

In Iowa, Where the Plan for an Attack on Harper's Ferry Was Explained and Adopted.

1. Dear friends, let me to you relate
A plan that I begot of yore,
A plan to conquer, extirpate
Slaveholding now and ever more.
2. When I survey the times to see
What is the best to meet our ends,
That plan always recurs to me
The visions of my hope extends.
3. It drives away all doubts and fear,
And fills my mind with prospects bright
"Free now, thank God," I seem to hear
From every Negro under sight.
4. But, ah! me what, alone am I,
With vast designs without your heart,
For want of help stern purpose high
Can only play a meagre part.
5. Contrivances for human good
Though creatures of the greatest mind,
Do need the all nutritious food
Of Charities and aid combined.
6. So gather round—stand at my back
As you used to do in Kansas
'Tis all I want—naught else I lack
For God will ne'er forsake us.
7. Not for my sake but for the cause
Of freedom through our native land,
The cause for which in Kansas wars
You made such bold, successful stand.
8. The cause for which the Pro-slave press
Denounced us all as robbers,
But with our God and the oppressed,
Our names are Christian laborers.
9. We are true "Soldiers of the Cross"
And followers of the "Lamb,"
And Christlike try to save the lost,
The weak, the poor and the damned.

10. But here we are too far away
From the Hell of master and slave,
Too distant here the one to slay,
The other one to save.
11. From the shores of the Atlantic,
The Gulf and the Mississippi,
I hear in mournful rhetoric
The prayers of the unhappy;
12. Hear husband, wife, "From morn to eve
We toil and strive the live-long day
Till evening shades our limbs relieve—
Half-fed, half-clad, and with no pay.
13. "Our daughters ravished 'fore our eyes,
Our sons pursued by raging hounds,
No hands to help them dare arise
Even afar nor on the grounds.
14. "Our poor little, darling infant,
Snatched, bundled and sold away
Hence, forever more too distant
Upon our loving arms to lay.
15. "We, too, will soon be sold apart,
Never to know where each will be
To bear through life a heavy heart,
But ne'er each other's face to see."
16. From the plains of old Virginia
They beseech us, they beseech us,
In the "cry of Macedonia
Come over to us and help us."
17. Hear the echo of their prayers
Ascending unto the heaven,
In voices of despair and tears,
"When shall rest and peace be given."
18. We cannot here with empty words
Nor on the fields of Kansas,
Perform with noises, guns and swords
The work that is before us.
19. Now to conquer this great monster
This devil of human bondage,
We need our forces to center
In a place of better vantage.

20. We need our forces near enough
Or right upon his sinful ground,
To cut aloose his stolen serf
And throw his wicked kingdom down.
21. Now my plan is for us to go
Somewhere on old Virginia soil,
And there attack their monster foe
There free his slave, his wealth despoil.
22. There to begin and never cease
Till death, yes, death or freedom come,
We want no peace, we'll have no peace,
Unless it come with freedom.
23. Some think this plan too rash to take,
Too dangerous, too difficult.
What other effort can we make
To reach the longed for good result?
24. 'Tis nigh unto a century
Since men began to talk and write
Against the evil of slavery
With all their heart and all their might.
25. When I was but a little boy
Near fifty years or more ago,
I used to hear with hope and joy
That slavery soon would have to go.
26. Our fathers, blessing to their name,
Abolished it early and freely,
And thought Virginia whence it came
Would imitate them duly.
27. But when about manhood I grew
How changed was that opinion,
For slavery was in open view
Fast spreading his dominion.
28. Rooted and fixed in the Southland
He grew ambitious and prosperous,
For room and power stretched his hand
And for the future got anxious.
29. The old Missouri Compromise
For the time obstructed his raid,
Confined her territorial size
To the region his greed had made.

30. Bound up in his legal limit
 With no one to question him there,
 He invigorated that spirit
 To tyrannize, scorn and to dare.
31. The bad blood of his evil heart
 Found arteries West and North
 To circulate through every part
 To scatter, and bring strength forth.
32. To rob more room in spite of law,
 Led on by evil ambition,
 He plunged us all into a war
 Upon the Mexican Nation.
33. Our citizens of the old free states
 Are now no longer free men,
 They all obey as he dictates,
 His throne they all defend.
34. His powers reach beyond the South,
 Far away in the Northern lakes,
 With brazen face and saucy mouth
 Our laws he alters, makes or breaks.
35. Day after day he is growing
 In powers and immunity,
 And night after night preparing,
 To live throughout eternity.
36. All his vices seen so often
 And talked of much more so,
 Soon they will embrace and soften
 The heart of many a foe.
37. What else then but some mighty blow,
 Hurried on by valiant hand,
 Can this great monster overthrow
 And hurl from our good land.
38. Just like a small poisonous tree,
 Nurtured and kept by foolish hand,
 Unnoticed in its infancy
 It flourished and weakened the land.
39. The husbandman finds that its fruit
 Is poisonous to human taste,
 Gets his good ax and cuts the root
 With all his might and all his haste.

40. Again I ask what other plan
Can pull this haughty monster down
And also raise his servant man
From under his merciless frown.
41. The good old Abolitionists,
For twenty-seven years or more,
To help this cause worked hardest
Of all that labored before.
42. Like the apostles of old time
They worked with love and patience,
But what they taught was too sublime
To reach the Nation's seared conscience.
43. Forbearing witness to the truth
Of brotherly love and freedom
All men, their kindred, too, forsooth
Poured on them curse and odium.
44. Wherever they went, far or near
In search of mercy for the slaves
Women and men would laugh and jeer
Or beat their heads with stones and staves.
45. All their lives long, through scorn and pain,
For poor humanity they plead,
With faith and courage, but in vain,
For the Nation's conscience was dead.
46. Yes, dead in sin and it to wake
Needs some blows as well as prayers,
Needs such a blow as men can make
When they put away doubts and fears.
47. You see the works of these good men
Availed this cause no lasting good,
'Tis even farther from the end
Than where in infancy it stood.
48. It is not worth a precious while
To ponder o'er the politicians,
For they are like the weathers child
Too inconsistent in their missions.
49. But from the holy Church of God
We should expect a righteous course,
That she would spread the truth abroad
Of freedom pure with all her force.

50. With that good Bible in her hand
 The book for right among all men,
 This holy Church throughout the land
 Slaveholders wrong and lust defend.
51. That rock of justice and mercy
 On which the Saviour built her,
 She wandered off in heresy
 For tyranny, slaves and lucre.
52. "Let us then be up and doing"
 In the words of freedom's poet,
 Leave the priests and statesmen hoading
 What the sins of slavery profit.
53. Remember Ossawatomie ;
 Think, too, of that terrible day,
 When we went against the enemy
 To engage in murderous fray.
54. Just like a cloud they covered the plain
 Armed and equipped was every man,
 They showered volleys of shot like rain
 Upon our small and feeble band.
55. Though few in number yet we stood
 And drove away unnumbered host,
 Their slain ones dyed the field in blood
 And the victory was our boast.
56. Think of the night they sneaked their way
 To us, unawares, at Black Jack ;
 The thoughts of that terrible day
 Disheartened and turned them back.
57. And as we drove Missourians
 By our valor and devotions,
 So can we shatter Virginians
 And slavery's institutions.
58. But we will not be all alone,
 Recruits are waiting on the ground,
 Those who suffer, work and mourn
 Are ready allies to be found.
59. With them we'll have a vantage ground
 The enemy's prop and stronghold,
 And will succeed to pull him down
 Partially and on the whole.

60. Judge not that they so long in bond
Possess a superstitious fear,
And could nor would not join us on
Against the heavy load they bear.
61. Bound up in the house of bondage,
They are armless, helpless and weak,
But just like animals in cage
For open holes they long and seek ;
62. Or like strong Sampson of the past,
Sightless and meek they thought him weak,
But when good fortune came at last
He vengeance on his tyrants wreaked.
63. So has it been with all mankind
Whose lot in slavery was found
They sought the good time to unbind
The galling chains that held them down.
64. The Negro race would do likewise,
If chance and help to them would go,
Kept down by law, by men despis'd,
How to be free they do not know.
65. In New York city long ago
Some one made known a "Negro Plot"
To raze with fire the city low
And win their freedom on the spot.
66. Longing hard for freedom's riches,
They began in Carolina,
Years ago to lay in ashes
Charleston city and its harbor.
67. Nat Turner, the true and the brave,
Tired waiting for rights to come,
Aroused and led his brother slave
To the jaws of death for freedom.
68. These plans were nipped just in their buds
For want of outside helping hand,
But yet they show much more than words
That with our band the slave would stand.
69. I was assured by their own mouth
Sometime before our fight in Kansas,
That if we should go in the South
Their race would never forsake us.

70. Yes, hundreds of them I beheld,
 Called fugitives but were heroes,
 For tears would fall to hear them tell
 Their stories of flight and of woes.
71. So glad were they to reach free land
 Off from the vale of human lust,
 They gave God thanks with uplift hand
 Mindless of hunger, rags and thirst.
72. In moods of pity one would speak,
 "I run from old Virginia State,
 O'er rivers, hills, I come to seek
 Some refuge from the worst of fate.
73. "These bruises and scars are marks I brought
 From the hands of my old master,
 Borne down by work the woods I sought,
 My sore weary limbs to shelter.
74. "But could not stay there very long
 For hounds were soon upon my track,
 I took this way with courage strong
 To come or die ere I go back.
75. "To rest and sleep day after day
 I made my bed in swampy wood,
 But all night long I hunt the way
 Or ramble round in search of food."
76. Say to me not that men like these
 Would not revolt for slavish fear,
 If aid would come they would be pleased
 All the horrors of war to bear.
77. Their struggle and their privation
 For themselves and for our country,
 Merit from this unkind Nation
 The patriots richest bounty.
78. In all the wars our country had
 As many historians say,
 Unto its guard the blacks did add
 Without murmurings and delay.
79. Let us go on and strike the blow
 Not blacks alone will rise and come,
 Others will come who were before
 Indifferent as to freedom.

80. Our timid friends that fear our course
 Will then shake off their doubts and fear,
 Will fall in line with all their force
 Seeking the front and not the rear.
81. We go with gladness, oh ! my God,
 To duty where duty we see,
 Easy or hard, home or abroad,
 To do and leave the rest to Thee.
-

At Harper's Ferry Just Before the Attack.

1. The hour, the spot, are here at last
 Their purpose, cause and hope we know,
 Our duty is to hold on fast
 To all the vows we made before.
2. To such as yield to our demand
 For freedom here and everywhere,
 In homes of safety let them stand
 And all their household comforts spare.
3. Those who refuse us or resist,
 Be as it may by words or arms,
 Enroll their names on death's black list
 To meet their dooms at war's alarms.
4. The blood that must be shed to-night
 Can never stain the name we bear,
 We fight for God's own holy right
 Which is to all mankind so dear.
5. Virginia robbed it from a race
 For over two sad hundred years,
 Abused and kept it in disgrace
 Regardless of entreating tears.
6. Those ancient tears rejoice to see
 This retributive night's advance,
 While Negro blood to you, to me,
 Is crying aloud for vengeance.
7. Around us stand with cheering hand
 The ghost of every Negro dead,
 Each blesses the freedom we demand
 Each bids us press with zeal ahead.

8. Angels rejoice with gladness, too,
While round the throne on high they stand,
To see poor mortal men pursue
The common foe of God and man.
9. Though we are few in numbers now
We trust the promise Jesus made,
That where a few for good shall bow
His spirit will be there to aid.
10. The saints are singing music sweet
All around the heavenly strand,
To see us here as Christians meet
To help and save our brother man.
11. Oh! Saviour, Angels, Saints, look on
While we the fathers will obey,
Befriend and comfort them that morn
And in the dust their burdens lay.
12. We open war at once to-night
And liberty for all proclaim,
We'll lead from darkness unto light
The weak, the poor, the blind and lame.
13. Before to-morrow's sun displays
Its golden colors in the East,
We'll wake slaveholders in amaze
To breakfast on a bloody feast.
14. My brothers what a holy war
In which we all will soon engage,
It will assert free equal law
Against the tyrants of the age.
15. The broken heart, the tearful eyes
The cheerless face none sought to please,
Will ere the morning sun arise
Have symptoms of a time of ease.
16. The runaways in forest wilds
And children sold to foreign shore,
Will soon return with happy smiles
To see their parents, friends, once more.
17. The screws, the lashes and the hounds
Shall no more glut off Negro blood,
Our forward march, our bugle sounds,
Will scatter them as by a flood.

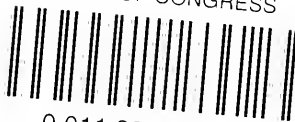
18. Husband and wife, daughters and son,
Forever more shall ne'er be sold,
Together they shall live as one
Till choice or Heaven breaks the fold.
 19. The fertile earth shall no more yield
Her fruits for unrequited toil,
The riches of the harvest field
Must be for him who tills the soil.
 20. Ye children all of Africa
"Possess your soul" and weep no more,
This night will force America
To grant you all you asked of yore.
 21. The laws of God your rights ordain
We are the instruments they send—
To cut your way, to break your chain,
And ages long of troubles end.
-

The Morning Before He Goes to the Gallows.

1. My race of life is almost run,
Rings even now the last sad knell,
When I must from this whole world turn
And bid it ever more farewell.
2. Cut off from all my works and plans,
To leave my faithful loving ones,
No more to hold my good wife's hands,
Nor see my daughters and my sons.
3. This heart must moulder in the grave
And beat no more for fellow man,
Can no more move these hands to save
And purify a single land.
4. The day, oh! Lord, I long to see
Is ever hidden from my sight,
To see Thy children all set free
And breathe the air of human right.
5. But let me not my fate bemoan
Oh, Father dear and King above,
Thy will be done and not my own
With me, my work and all I love.

6. To know and do Thy will below
 I lived and am prepared to die,
 To serve thy creatures high or low
 Where they dwell beneath the sky.
7. It was to wipe the crime away,
 Forever more of man to man,
 That I pursued, day after day,
 The cause and charge for which I stand.
8. I go before Thy judgment seat
 Where all my feelings, thoughts, are known,
 With naught of fear or shame to meet
 The sentence of Thy righteous throne
9. But send Thy holy spirit, Lord,
 To comfort, strengthen those I leave,
 Teach them to know that Thou art God
 In Thee to trust and to believe.
10. Make plain Thy ways, make known Thy will,
 That they may see, walk and obey.
 Urge, quicken them 'gainst slavery still
 To battle till the free-born day.

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